

2002-2012: TEN YEARS OF SERVICE



- ▶ FELLOW PROFILES: MILLICENT YOUNGER, ASHLEY BROWN, OLESYA VERNYI, & GENA UPSHAW . . . 2&3
- ▶ ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: ERIN CUNNINGHAM . . . 4
- ▶ POLICE RIDE-ALONG . . . 5
- ▶ AGENCY SPOTLIGHT: CITISTAT . . . 5
- ▶ CYCLING THROUGH BALTIMORE . . . 5
- ▶ BALTIMORE MEDIA & DEVELOPMENT . . 7
- ▶ WESTSIDE INITIATIVE CONTINUED . . . 8

Westside Initiative

Baltimore's Westside neighborhood was once the heart of retail businesses for Greater Baltimore. Unfortunately, retail patterns changed and middle class flight into the Baltimore suburbs, away from the Westside lead to a steady neighborhood decline beginning in the latter half of the 20th century. The Westside Initiative is a proactive public/private partnership for redeveloping approximately 100 square blocks of the west side of downtown Baltimore. The vision for the Westside is to attract new businesses and residents while remaining a predominantly residential area; focusing on its historic character, anchor institutions, access to transportation, building market potential, arts and open-space potential. On Wednesday, August 1st, 2012, Mayoral Fellows had the opportunity to tour Baltimore's Westside and witness its challenges of public safety issues, numerous retail vacancies and lack of sustainable private investments. Despite these confronting issues, Baltimore believes there is hope for improvement and renewal of this once thriving neighborhood.

Fellows were greeted by Westside Coordinator, Brian Greenan, at the corner of Baltimore and Paca Streets in front of the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law. As an expert in transit-oriented development and neighborhood planning, Greenan is charged with the task of leading the Westside Advisory Committee, a group established



Continued on Page 8

Mayoral Fellow Profiles



Millicent
Younger

Millicent Younger is originally from Glen Ridge, NJ, but recently she has been guiding Baltimore's youth as a kindergarten teacher at Northwood Elementary School. She completed her Master's in Education with a concentration in Urban Education from Johns Hopkins University in May 2012. Millicent applied to the Fellowship because of her experience as an educator. "As a teacher and as a citizen of Baltimore City, I often see the end result of decisions made in City Hall and the work done by city agencies," she says. "I wanted to learn more about what goes on in Baltimore's city government and experience working directly with the people who help to inform the decisions that influence how this city works."

Millicent's experience with CitiStat has exceeded her expectations. She is working to improve their data storage and retrieval system by researching best practices used by other Stat offices around the country. She is also working to prepare CitiStat data from the Department of Transportation and the Fire Department for entry into a new database. She has enjoyed the fellowship because she has gotten the opportunity to learn about what goes on in other agencies. She's been able to meet with representatives from multiple city agencies to discuss how their offices work with data. After the fellowship, Millicent will return to teaching at her school in the fall, and she plans on teaching for at least another year or two. Ultimately, she hopes to work for a city or state agency.



Ashley
Brown

Although Fellow Ashley Brown is originally from Durham, NC and attended the University of Florida, she is no stranger to the issues affecting communities in Baltimore City. As a graduate student at the University of Maryland, where she recently earned her Master's in Public Policy, Ashley worked with the Baltimore City Health Department to complete her thesis project. After researching best practices for implementing Healthy Baltimore 2015, she felt invested in the issues within the city and applied to the Mayoral Fellowship. "Baltimore is a great city," she says, "primarily because of its diversity. Many people have lived here their whole lives, and that makes the city more unique."

This summer, Ashley is working with Baltimore City Public Schools in the Office of Human Capital to develop a strategic method to staff schools. In this role, she works to coordinate several different projects related to staffing, including training and employee outreach, an experience she describes as "a really fast paced environment." Ashley has also enjoyed participating in the other fellowship activities, especially the teambuilding trip to the Baltimore City Public Safety Training Center, where she climbed a 50-foot wooden tower. After she completes her fellowship this summer, Ashley hopes to work as a policy analyst for an organization focused on improving the health of the nation's most vulnerable populations.

Mayoral Fellow Profiles Continued



Olesya
Vernyi

At the age of nine, Olesya “Lessa” Vernyi came to the United States from Moscow, Russia, with her parents and two older siblings. As an undergraduate at Le Moyne College, Lessa completed a dual major in English and Philosophy, and received the highest awards in both majors upon graduation. After Le Moyne, Lessa hesitated between pursuing a PhD in Philosophy and a law degree. Ultimately choosing law school, she is now entering her second year at Syracuse University College of Law. In a family of engineers and music teachers, she is the first to pursue law as a career.

Prompted by her boyfriend’s residency placement in The Johns Hopkins Emergency Medicine Department, Lessa decided to apply for the fellowship. Her versatile academic and legal background makes her a valuable member of the fellowship team. Thrilled to receive a position with Baltimore City Ethics Board, Lessa is working to review and improve the current financial disclosure law. “I’ve never done something which affects such a large amount of people – 1,900 employees file this form,”

Although Lessa deeply misses her family in Syracuse, NY, she is also falling for Baltimore’s charm. So much so, that upon completing law school Lessa plans to return to Baltimore for good, focusing on a career in intellectual property law. “My dream is to work in copyright, trademark, and patent law within the creative and scientific spheres of writers, composers and scientists,” she says. She is looking forward to “calling Baltimore home.”

Gena Upshaw



Gena Upshaw was born in Greensboro, North Carolina. Involvement in church, basketball, and health related extracurricular activities during early youth shaped her ambitions. At JHU, Gena majored in Public Health and minored in Africana Studies.

During her college years, she volunteered for Project HEALTH (now “Health Leads”), a non-profit organization working to close the gap between poverty and healthcare by connecting patients and their families to resources that meet basic needs. Furthermore, Gena interned at the JHU Center for Social Concern for the Greater Remington Improvement Association. From there, she went on to develop and head a free weekly basketball program for Remington youth.

Inspiration from former Mayoral Fellows prompted Gena’s application for the fellowship; her inquisitive and independent nature and impressive educational background made her a clear choice. “I was lucky to be placed in the Department of Public Works because it combines all of my passions: health, city government and policy,” she says. Her project is reviewing and improving Baltimore City’s current rat abatement program, Rat Rubout. Gena is inspired by the hardworking people that have worked for the City for decades; “they motivate me to work even harder,” she says.

Upon the conclusion of the fellowship, Gena will remain in Baltimore and work as a legislative aid to Maryland state delegate, Curt Anderson. She plans to return to school after working for a couple years. “Completing a joint program in Law and Masters of Public Health makes the most sense for what I want to do,” she says, yet admits that “I am still not completely sure what my future job will be.” What she is sure of is that it will be in issues involving policy that directly and indirectly affect people’s

Alumni Spotlight

Erin Cunningham



Mayor's Office of Community
Investment

Where are you from?

I'm Baltimore born and raised. I currently live in the Arcadia neighborhood of lovely Northeast Baltimore with my husband, 5 month old son, three dogs, a cat and two chickens.

What year were you in the fellowship?

2006

What agency did you work in?

Mayor's Office of
Community Investment

“ Participate in everything and meet as many people as possible. You really never know where an introduction or short conversation could lead in the future. ”

What was the most memorable part of the fellowship?

The fellowship is an overall wonderful learning experience, packed-full with opportunities – great projects to work on, a wonderful speaker series, and abundant networking opportunities. My fellows class was a really great group of talented, interesting folks who cared about the City – it's really gratifying to continue to run into them in the halls of City Hall and various agencies.

How has the fellowship affected your current career path?

Soon after my fellowship, I took a job with the Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice and have worked here for the past 6 years. I am currently serving as the Domestic Violence Reduction Coordinator for our office and have been the project coordinator developing a grant-funded Visitation Center for Baltimore City that will provide supervised visitation and monitored exchange services to families with histories of domestic violence. If you had asked me at the start of my fellowship where I'd be in five years, I would NEVER have guessed this. With that said, I couldn't be happier to be working on this issue and contributing to public safety in our City.

What is one recommendation you would give future fellows?

Really milk the fellowship for everything it's worth. Participate in everything and meet as many people as possible. You really never know where an introduction or short conversation could lead in the future.

Academic Background:

Baltimore City College

University of Chicago
B.A. in History

University of Maryland
Masters of Social Work
Candidate

Police Ride-along and Agency Spotlight

CitiStat



On the evening of Monday, July 23rd, Fellows were given an exciting opportunity to learn more about law enforcement in Baltimore City. After recent events at which fellows learned about various aspects of criminal justice in the city, they were able to experience law enforcement from a different perspective by riding with officers on their shifts. Fellows were spread across six of the city's nine patrol districts, where they were each paired with an officer for the duration of the shift, lasting from approximately 3:00pm to 11:00pm. While Fellows' individual experiences on the ride-alongs differed greatly—members of the group accompanied officers to fires, break-ins, domestic incidents, car accidents, stabbings, and foot chases—there were a few common threads. Several fellows commented on the changes they saw in the neighborhoods they patrolled as the sun went down, and almost everyone was exhausted by the time they returned to their districts' headquarters. Department of Transportation Fellow Kimiya Aghevli said of the ride-along, "It was fascinating to experience the working day of a Baltimore Police officer. I now have a better understanding of and deeper appreciation for the challenges they face each day, as well as the wide range of skills they need to possess."

CitiStat was launched in 1999 under Mayor Martin O'Malley as a strategy for performance management. The agency uses a combination of data tracking and reporting, data analysis, regular meetings with senior staff, and consistent follow-up to improve the services that the city delivers to citizens. One of CitiStat's most prominent responsibilities is analyzing performance metrics to improve service delivery. The city's 311 system is a key tool: for example, if a city resident calls 311 to complain about a pot hole, the service request is sent to the Department of Transportation. CitiStat analysts also have access to 311 data, and can analyze how well other agencies are responding to citizens' needs.

The Baltimore City Police Department was the first city agency to hold CitiStat meetings, modeling the program after NYPD's ComStat. Today, many other departments participate in the CitiStat process, including Transportation, Fire, Public Works, General Services, Housing, and Recreation and Parks. Each agency is responsible for submitting bi-weekly data to CitiStat through a customized Excel template. Metrics vary by agency and include personnel data, information on vehicles, response times, volume of tickets issued, and program participation rates, to name only a few examples. Once the templates are sent to the CitiStat office, located on the 6th floor of City Hall, the analysts begin to work on examining the data and preparing for the next CitiStat meeting.

CitiStat follows four tenets set forth by the late Jack Maple of the NYPD: Accurate and Timely Intelligence Shared by All, Rapid Deployment of Resources, Effective Tactics and Strategies, and Relentless Follow-Up and Assessment. By adhering to these tenets, the CitiStat process works to ensure that data is examined intentionally, and that agencies are held accountable for following through on the discussions held in the CitiStat room. In the first year of its operation, CitiStat helped the City of Baltimore to save 13.2 million dollars. By 2007, CitiStat had helped to save approximately 350 million dollars for the city. Today, other cities and states around the country look towards the Mayor's Office of CitiStat as a model for how to hold agencies accountable for high quality performance.

Cycling Through Baltimore



Baltimore is a bike-friendly city, a statement that was exhibited as The Mayoral Fellows were led through the city's bike paths by Nate Evans, Baltimore's Bicycle and Pedestrian Planner. The Mayoral Fellows rode through Inner Harbor, Harbor East, Little Italy, up Fallsway to North Ave., and back down through downtown to City hall, then back around to Key Highway. The bike paths were sprinkled with signs to guide riders. They were also able to witness the city's exciting new changes to increase bicycling in the city. Evans explained that there have been additional amenities added for bicycle riders, such as bike lanes and bike racks in parking garages. Some bike lanes throughout the city have even been painted green to alert drivers and bicycle riders. The improvements are helping Baltimore change the perception of biking from an exclusive activity to an alternative mode of transportation that is accessible to all.



Baltimore Media & Development

On July 25th, the fellows gathered at the Ballard Spahr conference room, which boasts a stunning, bird's-eye view of the Baltimore inner-harbor. Jon Laria, managing partner at the Ballard Spahr Real Estate department, and Andy Green, The Baltimore Sun's Editorial Page Editor, joined the fellows to discuss the work of the Baltimore Development Workgroup and the Baltimore media.

Baltimore Development

Mr. Laria interned with Baltimore City in 1983, before the program became the Mayoral Fellowship. He is the chair of the Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission and the founder of the Baltimore Development Workgroup, an affinity group of real estate professionals engaged in real estate development in Baltimore City. Mr. Laria began the discussion by providing the ethos of Ballard Spahr, a national firm with a century-long practice: commitment to the community with a sense of obligation and opportunity. The firm's real estate department undertakes a combination of public and private development initiatives, from representing Under Ar-



mor in its expansion on the harbor to urban development projects. "Baltimore has every challenge and opportunity," Mr. Laria said. When asked what needs to change in order to make Baltimore more developer-friendly, Mr. Laria replied frankly, stating that all cities have areas that appeal and do not appeal to developers. Baltimore differs from other large cities, Mr. Laria continued, in that it does not have the same leverage; it therefore must be progressive and modernize its practices in order to be "an attractive place to do business." The firm's success and commitment to this goal continues.

Baltimore Media

Speaking of commitment to Baltimore, Andy Green covered Baltimore County and then the State House for years prior to heading The Baltimore Sun's Editorial Page in 2009. Modern media has been "fundamentally changed by the internet," Mr. Green began. From an office of a dozen people covering Baltimore County a decade or so ago, now four people without an office handle the county's news. The web news environment and social media outlets provide for immediate, interactive news. Coverage is no longer as deep in some areas. Furthermore, exploring reporters – as opposed to those assigned stories – wrote some of the best articles in previous times; since the exploring reporter does not guarantee a story, this method has been cut down, likewise cutting opportunities to find rare news gems. In answer to how the Sun covers Baltimore crime, Mr. Green spoke of the fine line between appearing exploitive by covering too much and secretive by covering too little. The Baltimore Sun continues to be Maryland's largest newspaper and one of Baltimore's primary news sources.

Westside Initiative Continued

Upcoming
Events:

August 22nd:
Tour of Domino
Sugar Plant

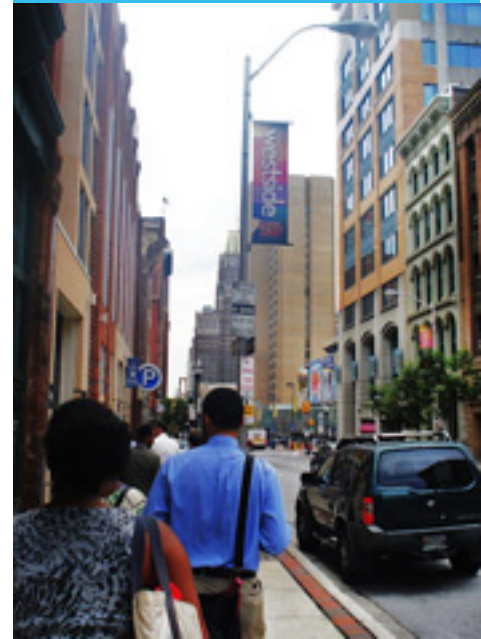


to guide revitalization efforts. He led the Fellows through a walking tour of the Westside beginning at the University of Maryland School of Law and ending at Lexington Market. Tour highlights included; The Hippodrome at the France – Merrick Performing Arts Center, 1st Mariner Arena, Westminster Hall and Burying Ground, The Atrium Apartments, and vacant properties ready for redevelopment.

One cannot ignore the vacant buildings that plague the Westside. Many developers fear the perceived lack of stability of the Westside neighborhood. However, these fears have not prevented businesses such as the two-story Panera Bread, a champion of new Westside businesses, from opening its business in February of 2012. In addition to attracting new businesses, there are proposals for funding facade improvements and plans to invest \$1.2 million in the streetscape.

A tour of Baltimore's Westside is not complete without a trip to World Famous Lexington Market. Despite the market's loss of prestige, it still boasts 8,000-13,000 visitors each day. The Fellows also met with Casper Genco, Executive Director of Baltimore Food Market, and Rachel Yong, Baltimore Healthy Food Coordinator. Both shared their insight on Lexington Market's role in providing food, but other necessary resources to the community, ranging from health clinics to holiday concerts.

"It's not going to be easy, but it will be done", claimed Genco when describing plans to expand the diversity of consumers in Lexington Market. The same can be said about revitalizing the entire Westside neighborhood. Like many other "rust belt" cities, Baltimore has had its share of urban challenges, but what makes Baltimore special is the fact it is overcoming these challenges and emerging as a prime destination for investment and growth.



Credits

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